

North Central Idaho Resource Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes
March 12, 2014

Meeting Location: Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, Confluence Meeting Room

RAC Members Present: Randy Doman, Don Ebert, Robert Hafer, Gary Lane, Chris St. Germaine, David Bodine, Steve Didier, and Jim Rehder.

RAC Replacement Members Present: None, positions are currently vacant.

Guests Present: Elayne Murphy (CBC), Alex Irby (CBC), Jeff Parker (Northwest Youth Corps), Steve Harig (Northwest Youth Corps), Craig Spencer (public), Randy Stevens (Palouse Clearwater Environmental Institute), Bobby Grillo (Montana Conservation Corps), Sally Ferguson (Selway Bitterroot-Frank Church Foundation), Mac McBoyle (Selway Bitterroot-Frank Church Foundation), Linda Hinds, Craig Trulock, Rick Brazell, Carol Hennessey, Gene Meinen (County), Mike Cook (County), Travis Mechling, Chris Goetz (Clearwater County Sheriff's Dept.), Michelle Youngquist (Project Learning Tree)

Designated Federal Official: Laura Smith

Recorder: Lisa Canaday

I. Call to Order and Agenda Review

Introductions: 9 members and several guests were present.

Agenda Adjustments – None

Chairman Kent Henderson made some opening remarks. He discussed the status of the law governing the RAC. He explained the laws that the RAC operates under so as to provide some understanding for those in attendance. The North Central Idaho RAC represents 5 counties unlike other RAC committees who represent just one county. Funds are allocated to the RAC committee and then broken down into 3 funds, Title I, II and III. Title I and III funds go to the county with I having little restraint and III having severe restraint. Counties are required to designate a certain amount of funds to Title II. Counties are to report their Title III expenditures to the RAC. **Kent would like a detailed list from the counties listing how they are spending those funds.**

Kent mentioned the Buckhorn Bridge project that was submitted and his reluctance to divert funds to that project since it has already been implemented. **The Forest Service is awaiting a legal opinion on this matter.**

Forest Supervisor Rick Brazell thanked the RAC for all of the work they have done since 2009 and before. He mentioned that the RAC had allocated about \$5.3 million since 2009! He then presented each RAC member with a plaque in appreciation of their service.

Kent continued and mentioned that the RAC is divided into 3 categories and each category must concur in order for a project to go forward. The RAC will listen to the presentations today and go home and review the projects. They will meet again on April 10th to prioritize the projects.

C: When we are approving the projects, we need to prioritize the projects to identify what we really want funded.

II. RAC vacancies

Including the replacement members, there are 5 vacancies. As required, 4 applications have been submitted to the Secretary for the 2 vacancies.

III. Presentation of Projects

#1 – Idaho County – Buckhorn Bridge – Gene Meinen

Gene mentioned that the County has no obligation to reimburse LTAC (LRHIP) for the \$100,000 loan that they received. If they receive a windfall they can reimburse them, but are not obligated to do so. The bridge is repaired and doing well as the ice comes down the South Fork.

Q: Was this project approved last year? Yes.

C: So, it was an approved project at that time. The difference is that the project is now complete. The funds that were used to do that were from a different source. Kent is concerned that we can't fund something that has already been completed.

C: Since an email was sent to the approved projects, the project was approved and then funds were taken back. This is different than a project coming in fresh, without being approved prior.

C: Since we decided to start all projects fresh, why are we discussing the fact that it was approved prior?

Could the County submit another project? No.

#2 – HCNRA Trails (Montana Conservation Corps)

#3 – Snake River Rec. Site/Vegetative Mgmt. – Beckijo Smergut (Call in)

This project is for the treatment of puncture vine at Pittsburgh Landing, treating trails between Pittsburgh Landing and Kirkwood and re-establishment of vegetation. Their EIS is still under injunction and these projects have been approved. These sites don't receive much treatment on a regular basis. This project would give them an opportunity to treat since they were neglected last year due to the injunction.

Q: Is this a donut hole treatment, how does this fall within the priorities of the Tri-County Weed Management Area (WMA)?

A: It does not fall within their Tri-County WMA, most of these sites are not part of a WMA. This is a forest priority.

C: This site creates a donut hole within a major infestation.

A: They have done the outside treatments in Idaho where the Wallowa Whitman Forest starts. She is unaware of treatments on private land.

Q: Steve Didier mentioned that he is part of the Back Country Horseman and they do projects down there every year. He agrees that treating the area around the campground is not productive. Are there any plans within the EIS to expand the area of treatment?

A: Cathy Conover said they have a good handle on the priority weeds in the area. This project was established to continue treatments in that area.

C: The weeds that you list should coincide with the State of Idaho weed list.

Q: The RAC funded a project a year OR TWO ago and they haven't heard any feedback on what happened. This project doesn't seem to be overly coordinated.

They are focusing on the puncture vine weed which is an annual weed. This weed gets stuck in tires and travels for miles.

#4 – Weitas Creek Bridge Repair – Travis Mechling/Chris Goetz - This bridge was closed in 2011. Initial costs were \$340,000 to repair, \$1M to replace. They have reduced the costs substantially. There is an inspection that costs \$28,000 that is required before they proceed. This will be a 2 tier project. This year they would like to do the scour project to see if the pier is sitting on bedrock. This is a very important bridge which provides access to a lot of recreation.

Q: The \$195,000 request, what does this include?

A: Both phases of the project. The 1st year would be \$40,000, \$28,000 for the fracture critical inspection, \$20,000 for the scour analysis. The remaining money would be to do the actual repairs in FY15.

Q: Would like to request a detailed funding list by FY.

A: Yes

Q: Is this on the CIP program for eventual replacement?

A: No, there aren't any funds.

C: That doesn't mean that there won't be in the future.

C: This is a critical project.

Don Curnutt – there have been no call for Road CIP projects in the last 3 years. Even if there was, the Region says they will not fund it. They don't consider this a viable project. So there is no support from the Regional Office.

C: When the bridge was closed, the Clearwater County commissioners met with Travis. They were adamant about getting the bridge replaced because people feel they are being locked out of access. There is one other way in over Beaver Dam Saddle, but that road doesn't open until July.

Q: What is the size of the area that would open up with this bridge being replaced?

A: It is a 6 hour drive from the Weitas Guard Station.

C: This is almost like Highway 12 being closed. There are a lot of people that access this and use it.

Jeff Henson – they inspected this bridge 7 years ago. He feels it would be better to repair rather than replace it and sooner rather than later. The longer you wait, the more expensive it will get. They are not proposing a new toilet for this area at this time.

#5 – Forest Tours for Educators and Opinion Leaders – Betty Munis (Michelle Youngquist presenting)

Q: How would this project continue without RAC funding?

A: They would find other funding in order to continue.

Q: What % of the total budget does your request fulfill?

A: The teachers' budget is \$40,000, requesting \$2500, or 6% and the Opinion Leaders budget is \$25,000, requesting \$2500, or 10%.

#6 – Idaho Project Learning Tree – Michelle Youngquist

Project Learning Tree has been around for 40 years.

C: Both projects require \$100,000, asking for \$5,000 or 5%

#7 – Hells Canyon Wilderness Trails/Montana Conservation Corps. – Cathy Conover (Bobby Grillo presents)

They would like funding for a minimum of 3 hitches as Montana Conservation Corps workers take their days off in the wilderness.

Q: Are there additional miles in this years' proposal?

A: Yes

Q: Has alternative funding been applied for through the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation?

A: Yes, Josh put in for the Gospel Hump project, but didn't receive any funding.

C: When you defer maintenance, the cost jumps exponentially.

Q: Is there a map showing where the trails are?

A: Bobby will get a map from Josh.

Q: 45 miles is pretty ambitious, can they use chainsaws?

A: Yes

Q: Do they work with different groups, i.e. Pathfinders?

A: Yes they do, they are hoping they will pack them in.

Q: Is the Wallowa Whitman RAC contributing?

A: He doesn't think so.

#8 – Clearwater Basin Collaborative – Alex Irby

Q: What is the balance of funds?

A: Alex will get that information to Laura who will distribute. They spend everything.

#9 – Salmon River Ranger District Motorized Trails – Bobby Grillo

This project could be funded in increments of \$9,000 with a minimum of 4 hitches = \$36,000.

#10 – North Fork/Palouse Developed Recreation Site – Steve Harig, Jeff Park

They work with 16-19 year olds in the Northwest Youth Corps. The youth are with them for 35 straight days. The youth receive high school credit for their work. Their goal is to have these students graduate ready for the work force. They want to increase the Idaho youth that they serve. They are looking to serve 80 youth this summer.

Recreation is a \$6.5 billion resource in Idaho. They are looking to do ground maintenance in the campgrounds. They listed their high priority campgrounds in their proposal. They are not like a contractor who is contracted to do only a specific thing, they can continue working if there is still money left over.

Q: The fees collected at campgrounds are to help defer costs. What percentage of the funding is derived from the fees collected at the campgrounds?

A: The Forest Service (FS) will only be able to contribute \$1,000. They are looking at in kind contributions, funding their workers to oversee this project.

Q: In the past this work was done by campground hosts, are these tasks that they could do?

A: Our hosts are greeters and fee collectors. This is heavy maintenance that is required to open the campgrounds and get them up and running. Once that happens, the hosts can keep up with the maintenance.

Q: What effect would it have on your program if the money was distributed mid-summer? Do you have a backup plan until the dollars come thru?

A: The challenge is that they can't confirm that the students have a job, but the youth are in a standby status until they figure out what kind of funding they have.

C: Kent will make an attempt to talk to our congressional delegation to push to get them to disperse the funds sooner. A vote was taken and the RAC would like them to speak on their behalf.

Q: What is the minimum amount of funds you could take?

A: \$8100 per week is the expenses for both projects. Adam McClory would like to prioritize the campgrounds that they work on.

Q: Do you recruit strictly from Idaho?

A: They recruit heavily in Idaho. Their objective is to serve Idaho youth in Idaho. If they reapply the second year, they try to give them a different experience.

#11 – North Fork/Palouse Sign Installation & Trail Maintenance – Steve Harig

Signs have been purchased but there hasn't been any money to help with installation. They will be marking trailheads, installing portal and trail signs. They will be clearing the trails as they go along.

#12 – Pierce Community Center – Pierce Recreation District - Chris St. Germaine

Replacing oil based boiler with a wood based boiler.

Q: Will this heat the swimming pool water?

A: Yes

Q: Will the National Guard Idaho Youth Academy utilize this center?

A: Yes

Q: What has happened since the last time this project was proposed?

A: They had done all of the work prior to last years' submittal.

Q: Could you use part of the funds?

A: No.

Q: Who is the Forest Service sponsor?

A: Ranger Rodriguez

#13 – Powell Divide Mastication – Geoff Kaeberle

Q: Is the Powell Divide timber sale a stewardship contract?

A: No.

Q: Is the mastication process a mass destruction?

A: No, it rips things down to about a 3' size. It breaks things down and puts them on the ground in a nice layer. Nothing below 5" in diameter will be treated.

Kent felt that from an environmental standpoint that it was a good thing.

Q: Do you have a replanting contract in the works?

A: If they treat it this year, the trees will be replanted in the fall.

Q: What is your alternative funding?

A: Retained receipts.

Q: How much lower can you go and still get the project done?

A: If no RAC funding is received, they will use retained receipts.

This is priority #1 and the projects are listed in priority order.

#14 – North Zone Stand Exams – Geoff Kaeberle

They do have stand exam dollars in the Central Zone (CFLR) area. These funds would help offset those funds.

Q: Didn't we fund a number of stand exam projects over the last several years? Where does this fit with those projects? Is this part of an expanding program?

A: No, this is an ongoing project that helps fund timber sales.

Q: Could we get a list of the other stand exam projects that they have funded?

A: Yes.

Stand exams allows us to do a lot of integration with the other specialists.

C: Last year we funded the North Fork district, and other districts.

C: The RAC doesn't want to be redoing or refunding projects.

Q: We have funded LiDAR and Stand Exams and have been told that LiDAR will replace everything. What is the relationship between these two things?

A: (Jeff Lau) LiDAR is a newer technology that has been developed out of Canada. They are attempting to do measurements from it. Unfortunately, certain measurements come out fine, but the majority doesn't. Then you have to do a sub sample. LiDAR doesn't replace stand exams. LiDAR is a large scale tool to do analysis over a large area. Stand exams are more of a site specific project.

#15 – South Zone Stand Exams – Geoff Kaeberle

Q: Why should we add RAC dollars to fund projects within the CFLR area?

A: Some of the stand exams will be in the CFLR area, but others will be outside of that area. They only received \$5,000 for stand exams in this area.

#16 – Shooting Star Pre-Commercial Thin – Geoff Kaeberle

Q: Where is the Shooting Star timber sale?

A: Geoff can get information on that

Q: Has Shooting Star been sold?

A: Yes, in the late 80's, this is actually a pre-commercial thin project.

Q: Is Shooting Star a traditional sale?

A: Yes.

Q: Aren't there other sources of funding to clear areas?

A: Yes, there are funds, but they have been spent.

#17 – White Bark Pine Stand Exams – Geoff Kaeberle

This project will target a specific timber type, the White Bark Pine (WBP) ecosystems. The Forest Service is trying to restore the WBP species in this area.

Q: WBP is a high altitude species, the majority of the districts are in wilderness. What percentage is treatable?

A: No one is sure. They are trying to do the stuff that isn't in the wilderness.

Q: For a threatened species, don't you have other sources of funding?

A: There hasn't been, they can get seedlings thru partnerships, but nothing to analyze the species.

Q: Will the findings have a bearing on whether the trees will be listed as threatened?

A: Probably not, but it will be part of the forest plan.

Q: Is some of this habitat in the CFLR area? Have we looked at that for funding?

A: Only in the wilderness of Powell and he hasn't.

Q: Could you check with Randy on the fire mitigation funding possibilities?

A: Yes

Q: Is the funding for WBP restoration in Montana?

A: No, we are a big player in the tree improvement area in Idaho. Regions 4 and 6 also have some projects going. Powell provides a lot of the seeds for Northern Montana and Idaho.

Q: If WBP is replanted will it be merchantable timber?

A: Not necessarily, but it is important to the bear species. But the species is native to this area.

#18 – Forest-wide Trail Maintenance – Carol Hennessey

They are coordinating with other partners like Northwest Youth Corp and MCC. They are all working together to fill in the gaps.

There was an unexpected occurrence which is what this project was about. Every year, they contract \$80,000 worth of trail work. Our funding is falling short this year due to some unexpected

obligations. The Forest Service is at risk of not being able to renew these contracts. This project would help them meet their trail target. They can take partial funding, which would then cause them to prioritize which trails they would open.

Q: What happens next year with the funding?

A: Not sure, Carol does know that the budgets won't go up. There are some things recreation won't have to pay out of their budget next year.

C: If we don't fund trail maintenance, we lose 3-5 years of work. Volunteers cannot replace the forest service trail crew.

Q: What is the minimum amount of funding that you could accept?

A: \$23,000 - \$25,000 per zone. Would like to fund a little in each zone about \$15,000 per zone.

Q: We will hear from Selway Bitterroot Foundation, have heard from North West youth corps, etc.? Do we fund the Forest Service or do we fund your partners?

A: Partial funding for all would be the best option.

C: When you defer maintenance, the costs go up.

Q: Will getting funding and then pulling back the funding work or what would you do?

A: They would probably trust that the funding would come.

C: Suggest that we would get more "bang for our buck" if we combined education with trail work.

#19 – Interface Weed Treatment – Carl Crabtree

Carl couldn't make it, but he asked if he could present on April 10th.

Steve Hiebert will give us an overview and Carl will answer questions on the 10th.

#20 – Riparian and Trail Work – Thomas Lamar, Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute (Randy Stevens presents)

Q: Is this project adding unspecified work to an existing contract? Shouldn't there be specified work?

A: With our existing contract, we meet with FS personnel and identify needs. They haven't had a chance to do that.

Q: Could we look at the existing contract?

A: Yes

Q: Concerned with some of the things requested, contract for \$20,000, what are we asking for or spending this on?

A: This would be contracting with local people to do the work, i.e. contractor for excavating a creek, etc.

C: This is a substantial budget for unidentified work.

C: The RAC has no way of rating this project against the other projects that are specific.

C: If Randy provided the accomplishment report from the last few years that would provide the specificity that the RAC would need.

Q: What is the request for FY14?

A: He will provide more detail when he gives them the accomplishment report.

#21 = Volunteer & Internship Program - Selway Bitterroot Foundation – Sally Ferguson/Mac Boyle

Mac introduced Sally as the new Director of the Foundation. She is replacing Rob Mason.

Q: In the past we have funded the foundation heavily, what is the minimum amount that you could live with?

A: We could cut the program in half; it would be hard to take an intern away. We could take out the cost of an intern (\$22,000). She would like to keep the funded positions.

#22 – Elk City ATV – Mike Evett, President, Elk City Dust Devils

Q: What percent do you think ATV use has increased in your area?

A: Since 2002, it has increased 100%.

Q: Do you see any decrease?

A: No, and they would like to install signs that show how far to the next intersection.

Q: Would this be part of the North/South Trail?

A: Yes

C: This group is doing quite a bit of work for \$5,000.

C: There are several groups that work on the trails.

Q: Will the trails identified complete a loop?

A: Over a few years it will complete a loop.

Q: Do you think improved trail maintenance keeps ATVs off of some trails?

A: Yes and the signs make a difference. Cross country travel is difficult in Elk City. They try to keep people out of the meadows by education and signs.

#23 – Little Slate Project (Riparian Plantings) – Anne Connor/Garry Seloske

They would like their funds to go into an agreement with Palouse Clearwater Environmental Institute (PCEI) that they would manage.

Q: Why did the riparian area degrade?

A: Past management activities, the water table drops, a cow camp in the area in the past, etc.

Q: You feel you could bring back that ecology to the stream banks?

A: Yes, it would help.

Q: If we gave you \$4000 what could you do?

A: We would collect materials so we could grow them out and then find a way to plant them in the future.

Q: You mentioned this is an extension of an agreement with the Tribe; would you go back to the Tribe and Bonneville Power to ask for more money?

A: In this project area, their money is allotted for stream crossing projects, so a planting project wouldn't compete. The Tribe's money is planned 5 years out.

Q: Was Clean Slate a NEPA project?

A: Clean Slate was a project prior to Little Slate.

#24 – Little Slate Project (Victor Creek Channel Restorations) – Anne Connor/Garry Seloske

Victor Creek is a tributary of Little Slate. This project is specifically for the design of this project.

Q: Do you know if \$30,000 will do the design work?

A: It is just ¼ mile, so she feels that it would.

#25 – Palouse RD Lidar – Andre Snyder

Q: Asking for \$103,000, what are the ownership breakouts? Have you asked for some funding from these entities? (Potlatch/State)?

A: 57,000 acres are Forest Service of 86,000

Q: If we funded accordingly, could you get funding from Potlatch and the State?

A: We could ask.

Q: Is the region not funding the timber program on these forests?

A: **Scott Godfrey would be able to answer.**

Q: Road placement, how detailed, can you identify species of plants with LiDAR?

A: It's not that accurate.

Q: Would the public be able to see the LiDAR data?

A: yes, at idaholidar.org

#26 – Level II Deferred Trail Maintenance (Red River RD) – Jayson Overall, Randy Borniger presenting

Q: How much understory do these trails go through?

A: It is pretty continuous. A lot of south aspect trails.

Q: If we don't fund this 8 miles, would you put this money towards another project?

A: They are busy with their work.

Q: Which one is the priority? Is it yours or the Dust Devils Elk City ATV project?

A: Their project would be the priority.

#27 Back Country New Invaders – Randy Borniger

Q: Could you take \$30,000 for one year?

A: Yes, I could take \$20,000, but it would drop the number of days worked.

Q: What happens to your other contributions if the amount the RAC funds drops?

A: They will probably go away, unless they would volunteer.

Q: The other contribution, the \$40,000 is it in kind?

A: Yes, jet boats are expensive

Q: If the amount is dropped, why wouldn't the in-kind drop?

A: It would, he thought you meant that if the RAC didn't fund, what would happen?

Q: Why should the RAC fund a donut hole within a large infestation?

A: At least half of the effort would be taking care of the larger infestation.

Q: Are any of these identified as noxious weeds on the list?

A: Yes, they are. They are in a database. They all have a code. Any non-native plants he finds, he brings in for identification.

C: Plants of concern, but not necessarily listed.

IV. Public Forum

RAC questions:

Q: Can Steve Didier give us his list ahead of time since he won't be able to attend the April 10th meeting?

A: No, he has to be available by phone.

C: You could give your recommendations to your other team members ahead of time.

When we meet on April 10th, there should be a discussion period on the projects.

When we meet on April 10th, we will try to prioritize the projects, but if we don't have a quorum or aren't able to get thru it, we will meet again on April 30th.

Need to have the requests from the presenters here on April 10th.

The meeting room will be open at 8:00 for those groups that want to meet ahead of time to discuss the projects.

Dave Bodine mentioned that these were some of the best projects that he had seen in a while.

The group would like to see before and after pictures of trail projects.

They would also like to see accomplishment reports from the groups they have given money.